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**NEWS RELEASE**

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the sentencing today of Matthew Lewis, Jr., in U.S. District Court in Norfolk, Virginia, to 144 months in prison for his role in a string of armed robberies of fast food restaurants and video rental stores in four Hampton Roads cities during a two month period between February 9 and April 7, 2002. Lewis pled guilty in federal court on August 6, 2002, to ten of the 12 charges against him and admitted to participating in nine of the 16 robberies, including one in Newport News, three in Hampton, one in York County and four in Virginia Beach. In all the robberies the assailants wore ski masks and forced the store clerks to surrender cash at either gunpoint, knife-point, or both. In at least two of the robberies, store clerks were cut with the knife during the struggle. In one case, a clerk received stitches after she was cut on her face, and also suffered a broken hand.

Lewis' two co-defendants, James Wilson, Jr., and Taylor Renae Huey, will be sentenced on Jan. 6, 2003, for their participation in the robberies.

This case was investigated through the joint efforts of Newport News, Hampton, York County and Virginia Beach robbery detectives, together with the FBI. Assistant United States Attorney Sherrie S. Capotosto prosecuted this case.